



Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee

District of Arizona
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Interaction between the Arizona Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee (LECC) and the Arizona tribal law enforcement agencies continues to expand during 2002-2003.

In April, the Indian Country Intelligence Network (ICIN) comprised of Indian Country police chiefs unanimously voted to serve as the LECC Advisory Subcommittee on Native American Issues. The LECC Advisory Subcommittees have been able to bring their concerns before the LECC Executive Committee for updates, advice, and on occasion, requests for support. The LECC Executive Committee is a representative group of federal, state, local and tribal criminal justice agencies. This group of approximately 40 members is a great sounding board for the different subcommittees and their critical issues.

The Chairperson of ICIN, and now the LECC Advisory Subcommittee on Native American Issues, will also serve as a member of the LECC Executive Committee. We are pleased to have the current Chairperson of ICIN, Steve Juneau, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, serve on the Executive Committee, along with Karl Auerbach, Assistant Chief, Salt River Pima Indian Community. Assistant Chief Auerbach has been a great asset to the LECC Executive Committee.

LECC 2003 Awards

Two tribal law enforcement task force efforts were nominated and awarded the 2003 LECC Cooperative Law Enforcement Award. The Award recognizes cooperative efforts by multi-agency groups in Arizona. The two task forces – **Operation Bootleg** (Navajo Nation) and **Operation Kiipokya** (a Hopi term meaning “to attack”) – were recognized at the 18th Annual Crime in Arizona Conference Awards Banquet held Thursday, May 29, 2003.

Members of the **Operation Bootleg** Task Force included: Special Agent McDonald Rominger, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Northern Arizona Resident Agency; Sgt. Timothy Lange, Navajo Dept. of Law Enforcement; and Joseph Lodge, Assistant U.S. Attorney, U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Arizona. Their agencies routinely experience the impact of alcohol and substance use on victims of crime and the public. To address the disorder and crime caused by alcohol on the Navajo Nation, the members implemented a method to attack the illegal distribution of alcohol on the Navajo Indian reservation. The Navajo tribal law enforcement, under Sgt. Timothy Lange's leadership, worked to identify appropriate communities, targets and supplemental manpower, while Special Agent McDonald Rominger, on behalf of the Flagstaff FBI, provided additional manpower, equipment and investigative resources to the undercover operation. These individuals monitored the operation from its inception through the arrests. Assistant U.S. Attorney Joe Lodge provided legal guidance throughout the operation and handled the defendants' cases as they moved through the federal justice system.

The collective efforts of this task force culminated in a large public demonstration of the success of cooperative federal and tribal law enforcement efforts. Moreover, the public nature of the arrests contributed to deterring alcohol sales within the affected communities and contributed to a more orderly environment for the Navajo communities for months thereafter.

Members of **Operation “Kiipokya”** Task Force included: Hopi Tribal Chairman Wayne Taylor; Dorma Nevayaktewa, Chief Prosecutor, and Geoffrey Tager, Prosecutor, Hopi Tribal Prosecutor’s Office; Special Agent in Charge Steve Juneau, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Office of Law Enforcement; Police Chief Alfonso Sakeva and Criminal Investigator William Coochyouma; and Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph Lodge, United States Attorney’s Office, District of Arizona. This four-month undercover bootlegging investigation developed after the Hopi leadership asked for assistance in curbing the impact of illegal alcohol and substance use on the Hopi communities. An increase in disorder, family disturbances, child neglect and abuse were among the concerns identified by the leadership with a common link – alcohol.

The BIA law enforcement agencies mobilized to provide investigative resources and manpower to identify suspects and develop the overall case. The Hopi tribal prosecutors gave support and resources where necessary to obtain tribal warrants and tribal prosecutions while the federal prosecutor provided legal counsel to the entire operation. The tireless efforts of these professionals resulted in the successful arrests and convictions of ten individuals responsible for distributing alcohol and, in some instances, controlled substances, illegally on the Hopi Indian reservation.

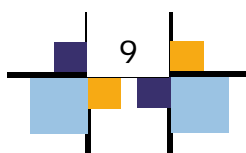
The results of this operation were widely publicized in Northern Arizona and continue to be the topic of routine discussion on the Hopi reservation. This operation curbed the illegal sale of alcohol on the reservation and launched a public awareness campaign on the impact of alcohol and illegal substance use on the Hopi Indian reservation.

Weed and Seed

In 1991, the U.S. Department of Justice established Operation Weed and Seed – a community based multi-agency approach to law enforcement, crime prevention, and neighborhood restoration. The Weed and Seed strategy brings together federal, state, and local crime-fighting agencies, social service providers, representatives of the public and private sectors, prosecutors, business owners, and neighborhood residents with the shared goal of weeding out violent crime and gang activity while seeding in social services and economic revitalization.

There are eight federally-funded Weed and Seed Sites in Arizona, none of them are located in Indian Country. To address this issue, the U.S. Attorney committed staff to establishing Weed and Seed sites in Indian communities. As part of that commitment, the U.S. Attorney’s Office, with help from the Executive Office for Weed and Seed in the Department of Justice, provided a Weed and Seed training seminar to a group of prospective sites including the following tribes:

- ***The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community*** has successfully assembled a coalition of collaborative partners, devised a strategy to address the crime on their reservation, and submitted an application for Official Recognition as a Weed and Seed Site. The U.S. Attorney’s Office is assisting with the review of the application by the Executive Office for Weed and Seed in Washington, D.C.



- ***The Yavapai-Apache Indian Community*** is currently in the process of establishing collaborative partnerships in the Verde Valley area. The new Tribal Chairman is committed to the task of eradicating crime on the reservation. The Police Department has created a full time staff position to oversee the implementation of the Weed and Seed Program. When all of the partners are on board, they will start devising a strategy to address crime issues on their reservation.
- ***The Southwest Regional TBOC (Taking Back our Community) Task Force*** was organized under the auspices of the Navajo Nation Local Governance Act. This group established its coalition of partners over a year ago and have an operational steering committee. They are in the process of attaining crime statistics for the Southwest district of the Navajo Reservation, and then they will devise their anti-crime strategy. If all goes according to schedule, they should be able to submit an application for Official Recognition as a Weed and Seed Site in October, 2003.

Operation Desert Risk

The border area known as the “West Desert” continues to challenge southern Arizona law enforcement and in particular, the Tohono O’odham Nation Police Department. Activity by “coyotes” and drug smugglers continues to present a threat to our nation’s security, contributes to an increase in overall crime such as homicide and theft, and, continues to lead to a record high level of tragic deaths due to exposure and dehydration. The U. S. Attorney’s Office, through the LECC, has spear headed “Operation Desert Risk” to address this problem.

The concept of “Operation Desert Risk” is to cohesively and in a coordinated fashion, focus the independent efforts of all enforcement agencies operating in the West Desert for a specified period of time. The joint goal is to secure our border and reduce crime and the number of deaths of illegal immigrants attempting to cross our border through a heightened law enforcement presence within the West Desert Corridor.

Communities such as the Tohono O’odham Nation, are greatly impacted by the associated crimes. This multi-agency effort should assist the Nation by reducing crime, reducing alien and narcotic trafficking, and increasing the safety of travelers, residents, and tribal law enforcement officers. The U.S. Attorney’s Office is committed to assist the Tohono O’odham, as well as all other West Desert border agencies, in addressing this problem with strong, yet fair, prosecution of those caught trying to smuggle aliens and drugs across our border. Operation Desert Risk includes a coordinated campaign on the Mexican side of the border so all who would consider assisting in and/or crossing are made aware of the penalties and the potential danger.

At the end of the operation, all statistics and relevant issues will be addressed by all participating agencies. The number of lives saved, officer/agent safety issues and budget resource expenditures/savings will be critically evaluated. Consideration of the initiative and its continuation will be determined at that time.

These are just a few notable strides that the Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee, United States Attorney’s Office, District of Arizona, has made to ensure that Arizona’s tribal communities become a full partner in all crime prevention programs within the State of Arizona.

